



Charter School Lottery Day Event Tool Kit

Each year public charter schools across the country hold lotteries to determine which applicants will attend the schools.

Schools must hold these lotteries because public demand for charters is so high.

Yet many state and local policymakers continue to institute or maintain legislation which limit the growth of quality charters.

A Charter School Lottery Day Event allows families of applicant students to gather together at the school for an exciting lottery event to learn who will attend the school the following year.

It presents a wonderful opportunity to:

- draw media attention to the demand for quality charters,
- grow awareness among families of the availability of quality schools of choice, and
- create an opportunity for charters to communicate their quality and success.

To see an exciting Charter School Lottery Day Event, please view this video from MATCH charter school in Boston, which created a video around their 2007 event: http://youtube.com/watch?v=fd9Ur_H9veE

To create your own Lottery Day Event, following are materials to guide and assist you.

Preparation

Event Outline

Messaging

Attendee Recruitment

Media Outreach

Timeline

Costs

Preparation

Date and Time Selection

Select a date which adheres to any state or local requirements and a time which will allow the maximum number of attendees – likely a Monday-Thursday weekday evening. Schools in the same district, community, or city may wish to hold Lottery Day Events on the same day to increase media newsworthiness.

Site Selection

The Lottery Event locale should be on school premises, should be able to accommodate the expected number of guests, and should be easily accessible.

Site Requirements

The site should have:

- enough tables and chairs to accommodate guests
- tables on the side to provide handout materials about the school
- tables on the side for refreshments
- coat racks if necessary and available
- a central location as a focus point for speakers and presentations
- A/V capability if a microphone will be necessary and if the school wants to show video
- adhere to any legal facility requirements regarding maximum capacity

Identify Potential Attendees

Attendees who should be invited include:

- Families of applicant students
- School teachers and administrators
- Current students and their families
- School board members, funders, other VIPs
- Local media (newspaper, TV, radio)

Event Needs

To execute the event you should consider:

- Several staff will need to “staff” the event – greeting attendees, announcing winners, etc.
- Pens and papers will be needed to record results, and a microphone might be needed to announce selected applicants
- Consider a student performance to kick off the event and a tour of the school to conclude it
- A refreshment table should offer drinks and snacks (i.e. water, juice, soda, coffee, cookies)
- Handouts about the school and charter schools could be offered
- If signage exists, or can be easily made, it should hang around the room and behind the lottery announcer

Event Outline

Following is a potential event outline, which can be adapted to individual school and community needs.

- 6:50PM Doors open -- school teachers, administrators, and students greet and seat guests, offer information about school, offer refreshments
- 7:00PM Student performance and/or show school video (optional)
- 7:10PM Welcome by school principal:
- Communicate background and success of school
 - Highlight number of applicants and number of spots
 - Explain state and community policies which negatively impact charter school growth and alert guests that information to contact policymakers is available on the handout table
 - Introduce celebrities or high profile guests if applicable (i.e. funders, board members, policymakers)
 - Explain Lottery event process
 - Kick off Lottery
- 7:20PM Lottery process:
- Two-three school administrators/teachers assemble at head table
 - One person selects and announces winning lottery names (can have two people split the duties)
 - One-two people record results
 - Names announced every 10-15 seconds
 - Ideally process will last no more than 20 minutes
- Media coverage/interviews:
- Other staff assist media with coverage and interviews of attendees during Lottery
 - School principal should be made available for interviews after welcome
 - CSO spokesperson also could be available to discuss charter school legislation and challenges throughout the state/community
- 7:40PM Conclusion by school principal:
- Welcomes new students and families
 - Thanks all for attending and encourages parents to be active in charter school movement – can identify activities parents can do, i.e. write letters to legislators and media demanding more high quality public charter school options
 - Offers tour of school (optional)

Messaging

Following are sample talking points and handouts that can be used and adapted as necessary to communicate about the Lottery Day Event.

HANDOUTS –ADAPTABLE SAMPLES

ABOUT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

Charter schools are public schools. They have some unique traits, however, that increase the chances of a successful education for a child.

- **Choice:** Parents select the school their child attends. Teachers choose to work in the school, most often for the professional satisfaction and the opportunity to shape school policy.
- **Innovation:** Charters' flexibility to adapt to the educational needs of individual children, commitment to excel and serve the community, and high levels of accountability often lead to innovative methods of teaching and of operating schools.
- **Flexibility:** Charter schools are free to make timely decisions about developing curriculum, structuring the school day, and hiring teachers who meet the needs of their students.
- **Accountability:** Charter schools operate within a multi-tiered accountability system – to parents, to authorizers via a performance-based contract, to the state, and to lenders – that leads to quality schools and achievement.
- **Partnerships with Parents and Communities:** Parents and community members are welcomed in charter schools and involved in the day-to-day operations of them.

Public Charter School Resources

List School and State Charter School Organization web sites, phone numbers, email addresses, and mailing addresses.

PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BENEFITS

Public charter schools are answering parents' increasing demand for high-quality public schools.

- There are currently about 4,200 public charter schools operating in 40 states and D.C., serving approximately 1.2 million students.
 - *Supporting local community/district/state figures?*
- Parental demand for public charter schools remains strong. Between 300 and 400 new public charter schools open each year, and between 100,000 and 150,000 new students enroll in public charter schools each year.
 - *Supporting local community/district/state figures?*
- Sixty-one percent of charter schools across the country reported waiting lists averaging 149 students, enough to fill over 1,100 new public charter schools. Nationally 365,000 students are on public charter school waiting lists.
 - *Supporting local community/district/state figures?*
- Nationally, public charter schools disproportionately serve low-income and minority children – those most often failed by traditional public schools.
 - *Supporting local community/district/state figures?*
- In eight communities, charter schools serve at least 20% of the public school students, with New Orleans heading the list at 57 percent of students enrolled in public charter schools. In 29 communities, charter schools serve at least 13% of public school students.
 - *Supporting local community/district/state figures?*

- more -

Charter schools are raising the bar about what's possible – and what should be expected – in public education.

- **Charter school students made strong academic gains in the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress.** Charter schools outpaced academic gains of traditional public schools in 8th grade reading and math, especially for African-American, Latino, and low-income students.
- **Charter schools are usually among the top performers in school districts.** These high performers are setting important examples about what public schools can achieve, often with disadvantaged students. They're shattering low expectations and breaking through long-standing barriers that have prevented large numbers of students from achieving educational success.
 - Supporting local community/district/state figures? If schools are not performing better or at par, can delete the above talking point.
- **More and more data indicate that charter schools deliver promising student achievement results.** In an analysis of 40 comparative studies, a vast majority found that overall gains in charter schools were larger than traditional public schools, including those schools serving at risk students.
- **Charter schools improve with age.** In a review of 14 studies that examined whether individual charter schools improve their performance over time (e.g. after overcoming start-up challenges), 10 found that as charter schools mature, they improve.
 - Supporting data on local schools?

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PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL CHALLENGES

Public charter schools face several major challenges.

Funding and Facilities

- Most charter schools have significantly lower than average per-pupil funding than traditional public schools. An August 2005 study of 16 states and DC by the Fordham Foundation found that public charters receive 78 cents for every dollar that goes to non-charter public schools.
 - Supporting local community/district/state figures?
- Most charter schools are starved for facilities and resources for facilities. Charters often are not allocated adequate locally generated property tax dollars and do not have access to adequate facilities funds.

Caps

- 25 states and DC have imposed caps on the number of charter schools which can open or operate in the state. In nine of these states, these caps are currently constraining charter school growth.
 - Provide state specific info
- State-imposed caps on charter expansion do not ensure quality, but do limit access to high-quality public school choices for the students and families who are demanding them. States must connect charter growth to charter quality, but by providing the resources, oversight, and accountability that helps charter schools thrive – not by arbitrarily restricting charter growth.

Contact your state and local legislators to tell them you want fair funding for public charter schools.

List state and local legislator names with contact information (mail address, email address, phone number).

Public Charter School Resources

List School and State Charter School Organization web sites, phone numbers, email addresses, and mailing addresses.

School Information

XYZ SCHOOL CELEBRATES xx YEARS OF PROGRESS

Overview

Short paragraph about when the school opened, who founded it, and what's unique about it.

2006-2007 Highlights:

Student Population

- Enrollment has more than tripled (to 420 students), since XYZ Academy opened in 1994.
- Average daily attendance rates top 90 percent. About 98 percent of students return each fall.
- XYZ has provided individualized attention and academic support to 35 special education students. Of those, 12 have completed their individual education plans and returned to a regular classroom.
- Of 30 graduates, 22 are in college. Fifteen secured scholarships. One receives college funding from a local corporation for which he interned during high school.
- Of XYZ's 30 graduates, six were previous dropouts. Eight opted for jobs immediately after graduation. Their average starting salary was \$25 an hour.

Teachers

- The teacher/student ratio is 1:19. When including classroom teaching aides, that ratio is 1:12.
- XYZ teachers average six years of experience. Fourteen of the original 16 teachers still work at XYZ.

Curriculum

- XYZ's character education program reinforces virtues daily. Students also study important historical figures from our nation and others.
- More than 25 of 30 high school students participate in at least one of 12 advanced placement classes.
- All students at XYZ Academy create and manage their own businesses—even kindergartners.
- XYZ fifth-graders, 80 percent of whom qualify for free- or reduced-price lunches, perform an annual Shakespeare play. They write papers interpreting how it applies to their lives.
- All XYZ students study Spanish or French beginning in kindergarten.
- More time on task equals more learning: XYZ's academic year is two weeks longer than local traditional public schools. Each school day is also 1.5 hours longer.

Discipline

- XYZ's strict discipline policy requires students to visit the principal for any classroom disruption. In 1994, there were 115 principal visits. In 2002, only 10 visits occurred.

Corporate Partnerships

- XYZ has corporate partnerships with General Motors, Henry Ford Health Systems and Covansys.

(This document prepared by Knight Writers, PR consultants for the Michigan Association of Public School Academies.)

Attendee Recruitment

A successful Lottery Day Event will be a well attended one at which there is much enthusiasm and excitement for the school and the lottery process.

Those invited should include:

- Families of applicant students
- School teachers and administrators
- Current students and their families
- School board members, funders, other VIPs
- Local media (newspaper, TV, radio)

VIPs – school board members, funders, etc. – should be invited by phone, written invitation, and/or email by the school principal.

Teachers and administrators should be invited in person.

Applicant families may be the most challenging to reach and secure. Some concerted effort will need to be made to reach them and encourage their attendance. Below is a sample flyer you can disseminate by email or mail. You can encourage attendance by:

- Emailing applicants
- Calling applicants
- Mailing applicants
- Posting on school web site
- Sending flyer home with current students (if applicable)

Families will be more likely to attend if you can present them with reasons that entice them – they will have a chance to meet the principal, teachers, and students; they will be able to tour the school; many other families will be there; there will be snacks and refreshments.

Current students and their families can be invited during the day and by sending the flyer home to parents. You can also post it around the school to generate excitement.

Media outreach is discussed below.

Parent Recruitment Flyer

Instructions: Mail/email it to applicants to encourage attendance

**NAME OF SCHOOL CHARTER SCHOOL
LOTTERY NIGHT
THURSDAY APRIL 3, 2008, 7PM-8PM
ADDRESS**

Bring Your Family to *Name of School* on
Thursday April 3 from 7-8PM for
Our First Annual Lottery Admissions Event to
Welcome Our Newest Students

- Meet *Name of School* teachers, students, and Principal *Name*
- Tour and learn more about *Name of School*
- *Performance information*
- Enjoy refreshments

Confirm Your Family's Attendance
Email *email address*, or
Call *phone number*
Please include the number of people attending.

Media Outreach

A successful Charter School Lottery Event is a tool to communicate to the media and a wider audience – of families, policymakers, and other decision makers – the demand for charter schools, the success of charter schools, and the unfair challenges charter schools face.

Media should be alerted to the event so they can cover it by sending reporters and/or camera crews. The story should appeal to media because they can show the human side of the demand for charters and include the “harder news” elements of charter success and policy challenges.

If you don't have experience dealing with the media, following are some guidelines to assist you. The National Alliance is also happy to help – please contact Jessica Schwartz Hahn at Jessica@peithocom.com or 703-478-0658 if you have questions or would like guidance.

Guidelines

Target Media: Identify the TV, radio, and newspaper outlets you want to invite and gather report names, phone numbers, and email addresses.

- Television news should be contacted via their News Assignment Desks and their education reporter, if they have one.
- Radio programs should be contacted via News Assignment Desks, News Director, or specific show producers.
- Newspaper education reporters and education editors, if they exist, should be contacted.

Write Pitch Letter: Write 2-3 short paragraphs describing the highlights of the event and why the reporter should attend/outlet should do a story.

- Think about your school and charter challenges – what is important for people to know?
- Think about attendees – what kind of people can the reporter interview?
- Think about the reporter's experience – convey the drama of the night

A sample pitch letter is below.

Write Media Alert: Write a Media Alert to your local media highlighting the Who, What, Where, When and Why. A sample Media Alert is below.

Email/Fax Media: 7-10 days before the event, send the pitch letter and media alert (in the body of the email, no attachments) to local media.

Practice Verbal Pitch: For follow up calls to media, practice your “pitch” – what you will say.

- Summarize the highlights of the event and extend and invitation in 3-4 sentences/10 seconds.

- Provide TV and newspapers with an understanding of the visual elements of the colorful exciting program.

Phone Calls: The day/day after media are emailed/faxed, place follow up phone calls to media to encourage coverage/attendance.

- Remember to introduce yourself and your affiliation
- Always ask if they have 1-2 minutes to talk
- Make the ask – “Will you cover the event?”
- Follow through – provide for requests of the reporter
- Call non-committed media back two more times – 4-5 days before the event and 1 day before/day of the event.

Media Attendance: At least one staff member at the event should be responsible for greeting the attending media, coordinating on site interviews with school teachers/leaders and parents, and following up the day after the event to answer any further questions/coordinate additional interviews.

Spokespeople: School representatives (principal, board members, teachers) should be briefed on the same talking points about the school and charter schools (see Handouts). Select 1-2 applicant families and 1-2 current students that could best exemplify the school and the need for charters with whom reporters could speak.

PITCH LETTER – ADAPABLE SAMPLE

Dear *Name*,

This year, XXX students applied for XXX slots at *Name of* public charter school. As you may know, charter schools are public schools, so next year's attendees must be drawn by lottery.

On *Day, Date at Time*, these applicant students and their families will attend a lottery event at the school to hear the names of the winners drawn. It's sure to be a dramatic and emotional night, and we hope you'll like to join us and report on the event. (See Media Alert below.)

You can speak with school leaders, teachers, and current and prospective students and their families. Unfortunately some students that night will not be accepted, and you may want to hear from them why they want to attend *Name of* charter school.

You can also speak with school leaders about the challenges charter schools face in *City*. Although parental demand for charter schools continues to grow, as exemplified by our waiting list, charters in *State* receive unequal funding and are starved for adequate facilities.

I'm happy to send you more information, and please visit our school's web site to learn more about us: *website*.

Thank you for your consideration, and please contact me if you have any questions.

Best,
Name

MEDIA ALERT – ADAPTABLE SAMPLE

Contact Information:

Name

Work Phone/Cell Phone

Email address

NAME OF SCHOOL HOSTS **FIRST CHARTER SCHOOL LOTTERY DAY EVENT**

XXXX Students Apply for XXX Open Seats

What: *Name of School* Charter School will hold its first lottery day event to identify the students who will attend next school year.

Event includes:

- Student Performance
- Lottery winner announcements

Who: XXX parents, current and potential students, and school teachers and administrators are expected to attend.

- *List any well known attendees*

Where: *School address, site location*

When: *Date, Time*

About Name of School Charter School:

Provide paragraph of information

About Public Charter Schools:

Charter schools provide public education options for parents and students. Charter schools are allowed increased flexibility to operate and adapt to the educational needs of children, and maintain high levels of accountability to students, parents, the community, and the state to provide high-quality education.

Currently in *community/state* there are XXX public charter schools serving XXX public school students, with XXX students on charter school waiting lists.

Nationally there are approximately 4,200 public charter schools operating in 40 states and Washington D.C., serving approximately 1.2 million students, with 365,000 students on charter school waiting lists.

Timeline

Six Weeks Before Event

- Select date and time
- Select site
- Determine if a student performance will be featured – begin rehearsals if necessary

Five Weeks Before Event

- Identify potential attendees – applicants, school representatives, VIPs
- Finalize parent flyer/other outreach mechanism (letter, email, etc)
- Count final number of applicants (or as soon as possible)
- Conduct initial outreach to applicants, school representatives, VIPs

Four Weeks Before Event

- Adapt handouts for event
- Determine if a school tour will be featured – identify tour route
- Determine if microphone needed - secure
- Begin signage design, if necessary

Three Weeks Before Event

- Follow up with potential attendees, especially applicant families, to generate attendance
- Secure tables and chairs for event
- Coordinate A/V needs, if necessary
- Target media; draft pitch letter and media alert

Two Weeks Before Event

- Email/fax and call media
- Identify school spokespeople and brief on talking points from Handouts
- Start to identify attending applicant families who media can interview

One Week Before Event

- Follow up with potential attendees, especially applicant families, to generate attendance
- Continue to identify attending applicant families who media can interview
- Draft opening remarks from principal
- Identify different staff roles at event – greeters, media coordinator, school tour guide, lottery announcers and recorders
- Secure pens and paper for event

Two Days Before Event

- Follow up with media
- Secure refreshments and utensils (cups, napkins, plates)
- Copy handouts for event

Day Of Event

- Set up room – chairs, tables, refreshments, head table, signage
- Follow up with media
- Follow Event Outline

One-Two Days After Event

- Follow up with media
- Communicate success of event to school board members, funders, state CSO, and other VIPs

Costs

Executing a Lottery Day Event will require minimal outright costs as well as staff time.

Outright Costs

- Copying of handouts
- Refreshments
- A/V needs, microphone
- Signage
- Pens and paper

Staff Time

- Site coordination and set up
- Adapting written handouts
- Secure A/V, refreshment, pens and paper needs
- Signage coordination
- Student performance coordination
- School tour coordination
- Attendee recruitment – emails, calls, reviewing RSVPs, responding to calls
- Draft principal's welcome
- Prepare school spokespeople with talking points for media interviews
- Identify applicant families for media interviews
- Media outreach – emails, calls, follow up
- Event attendance and responsibilities
- Follow up with VIPs